

# Women's changing image in the military

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Each year, more and more women choose careers that were once the province of men.

Women now serve as Navy Seals and walk as sentinels at Arlington National Cemetery. Women also attend the Virginia Military Institute which was once an all-male school. The Marine Corps and Navy recently named their first female three-star generals. Even at RAFs Lakenheath, we have a fighter pilot, several squadron commanders and four chief master sergeants who are women. The achievements and numerous contributions of women have certainly transformed the military into a more ready and capable force.

Twenty years ago, at my first assignment, I was a member of the supply squadron's equipment management section at Cannon AFB, N.M. I was working the late shift during a mobility exercise. My job was to ensure custodians signed for the equipment that they had identified for deployment. That evening, the flight commander came in for a visit. He sat down in the chair next to me and asked me how I was doing. Then he wanted to know if I understood what I was doing. I thought he asked me this question because I was an airman first class and my supervisor allowed me to work on the night

shift alone. I told him that I believed my supervisor had trained me well.

The next thing he said really took me by surprise. My flight commander told me that he didn't believe women should be in the military. He simply felt that the military profession was not for women.

Now, eighteen years later, I am a chief master sergeant running the supply management and systems flight and have the additional duty as functional manager for a squadron of 311 people.

March 1997 marks the 16th anniversary of the national celebration of women's history. This year's theme "A Fine and Long Tradition of Community Leadership" highlights the many

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contributions that women have made as well as the significant impact they've made in American communities. One such community is the armed forces. Courageous women throughout all the services have paved the way time and time again. Their

leadership has led to increased roles for women in the military. Policies and laws against sexual discrimination and sexual harassment are also firmly in place.

As Brig. Gen. Mary Saunders, Air Force director of transportation, said during a recent speech given at Lakenheath, "Vigilance is the watchword."

This simply means that we must acknowledge that discrimination and prejudices are prevalent and hinder progression. There-



**CMSgt. Gail Stringer at an NCO academy graduation in 1983.**

fore, it is still important to take time out to recognize and celebrate great contributions of minorities in America to help bring about additional reform.

Women of today must continue to maintain that progress they've made and conquer new territory. They also have a greater responsibility in preparing the women of tomorrow. During this month, all members of the armed forces are encouraged to reflect upon the successful legacy of women in the armed forces. People should also commit to providing the opportunity for advancement of women into every fabric of the military. It's the right thing to do!

## Rapid global mobility delivers worldwide power

WASHINGTON (AFNS) — When a crisis erupts without warning anywhere around the world, the United States will need to rapidly deploy forces thousands of miles from bases in the continental United States to deter a potential aggressor or defeat an adversary.

The need for this fast response led senior Air Force leaders to reemphasize rapid global mobility as one of the service's six core competencies in its new strategic vision: "Global Engagement: A Vision for the 21st Century Air Force."

The other core competencies are air and space superiority, global attack, precision engagement, information superiority and agile combat support.

"Rapid global mobility provides the nation its global reach and underpins its role as a global power," said Secretary of the Air Force Sheila E. Widnall.

"The ability to move rapidly to any spot on the globe ensures that tomorrow, just as today, the nation can respond quickly and decisively to unexpected challenges to its interests," she said. "As the number of forward-deployed forces declines and the need for immediate response to overseas events rises, the Air Force's global mobility forces will be in great demand by future joint force commanders."

When an operation must be carried out quickly, airlift and aerial refueling will be the key players, the secretary said. She added that rapid global mobility builds the air bridge for joint forces, enables multinational peace efforts or speeds tailored forces wherever they are needed.

"Rapid deployment will remain the future joint team's most important combat force multiplier," said Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman, Air Force chief of staff.

In the Global Engagement vision of the 21st century, rapid global mobility will be multifaceted. The speed with which forces are moved will increase, and airlift and air refueling capabilities must be able to deliver tailored forces operating in a smaller area.

"Rapid global mobility is driven by the nation's needs," Fogleman said. "Because we are going to have a CONUS-based contingency force, we've got to have the capability to get that force to the fight."

"That is what rapid global mobility does not only for combat operations, but for peacekeeping or humanitarian efforts."

"Airlifters and tankers give the national command authorities the ability to reach out and influence events around the world. This trend," he concluded, "will continue as far into the future as we can imagine."